**SUBJECTS.**

2. *The desirability of allowing more funds to the Town Improvement Committees and also revising the Rules so as to give the Committees greater powers in the matter of spending the moneys granted to or collected by them.*

*Mr. F. F. Mackay* (Member, T. I. C., Alleppey) said that a comparison of the local taxation at Alleppey with that of British Indian Municipalities was not a fair one, as the fiscal systems of the two provinces were different and as Travancore had an export duty while British India had none. Alleppey had at least two grounds for claiming a better treatment at the hands of the Government than the other T. I. C's. The first was a comparison of Alleppey with the other T. I. C.'s, and the second was its special position as an entrepôt of trade and the principal seaport of the State. Proceeding to compare Alleppey with the other T. I. C.'s, the Member quoted the following figures to show that the claim of Alleppey stood superior to that of the rest.

| Town. | Population. | Government grant. Rs. | Government grant per head of population. Re. | Funds raised by local taxation per head of population. Re. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alleppey ... | 25,000 | 3,549 | ·14 | ·128 |
| Nagercoil .. | 25,330 | 4,000 | ·15 | ·145 |
| Quilon ... | 15,700 | 5,000 | ·32 | ·067 |
| Kottayam ... | 14,600 | 3,000 | ·20 | ·044 |
| Trivandrum ... | 57,000 | 27,000 | ·46 | ·163 |

He added that the new boat-toll, proposed to be levied during the current year and estimated to amount to Rs. 2,000, would bring Alleppey to the top of the list in the matter of local taxation, with Re. ·21 per head. The Member argued that, on the basis of population, Alleppey would be found to head the list in the lowness of the Government support and the highness of taxation, but it was regrettable that, in spite of all the circumstances, the Alleppey T. I. C. received the least support from the Government. He requested that, if Government were determined not to increase their grant to the Committees, a more equitable distribution might at least be made, other towns being required to tax themselves to the level of Alleppey and the savings effected in the Government grant thereby being granted to Alleppey.

The Member next observed that the hands of the Committee were tied in the matter of spending the money raised by taxation. The Committee were compelled to obtain the sanction of the Government for every petty little need and they had absolutely no discretion in the matter. There was recently a suspected case of plague at Alleppey, and the Committee's recommendation to increase its staff temporarily was vetoed by the Government, though the expenditure on that account was within the Budget allotment sanctioned for the Committee.

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As regards the importance of Alleppey on account of its special situation as the greatest trading centre of the State, he said that the greater part of the population of the town depended directly or indirectly upon trade and that, as a revenue-producing area, no town in Travancore could touch Alleppey. About one-third of the export duties derived by the State came from Alleppey and the amount went for the benefit of the whole State. It was but fair, therefore, that the Government should give at least a fraction of the amount so collected to the town which helped to produce it, in order that the town might be equipped and maintained in a condition suited to the great volume of its trade. The Member concluded by saying that he confined his representation to 'finance', as that was the most important requisite for every reform, such as better sanitation, lighting, registration of births and deaths, and the segregation of persons suffering from infectious diseases, about which the Committee had many proposals to make.

*Mr. K. Krishnan Pandalai, B. A. & B. L.* (Member, T. I. C., Quilon) said he was glad that matters had been rectified since his representation at the previous Assembly that the Town Fund was not available to the Committee for expenditure. He added that, though the Town Fund was placed to the credit of the Committee, the latter had no power to expend anything out of it. He then referred to specific instances in which Government sanction had to be previously obtained for very small items of expenditure required for legitimate purposes. The Committees were in that matter treated like Government Departments and were subjected to Budget control and the provisions of the Account Code. Anything requiring a change either in the establishment, or a redistribution, readjustment or reappropriation of funds, always required the sanction of the Government. The Member said that a larger volume of discretion should be vested in the Committees, who ought to be able to judge for themselves what they wanted. The Government might of course have a supervision over the matter. He therefore requested that some measures might be adopted whereby, the allotment of funds being once made by the Government, the Committee would have some choice and discretion in spending the money for proper purposes, a Government Officer being deputed once a year, if necessary, for auditing the accounts.

At this stage, the Dewan invited the Members representing the other Town Improvement Committees to express their views in the matter.

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*Mr. V. Sankaranarayana Iyer, B. A. & B. L.* (Member, T. I. C., Nagercoil) said that, though as regards Nagercoil, the difficulty in getting Government sanction was experienced only in times of cholera, unnecessary correspondence and consequent delay might be avoided by allowing to the Committee a little more discretion in its internal management, and that it was therefore necessary to revise the Rules in respect of the Town Improvement Committees.

*Mr. F. P. Fernandez* (Member, T. I. C., Trivandrum) said that he agreed generally with Mr. Krishnan Pandalai. He knew of several instances in which the Committee applied for funds, and their requests were vetoed, although the Committee had proposed to raise money by taxation according to the Regulation. He added that the Trivandrum Committee was frequently handicapped for want of funds and he suggested that the Rules should be revised so as to allow greater powers to the Committees.

*Mr. K. C. Mammen Mapillay, B. A.* (Member, T. I. C., Kottayam) was absent.

*Dewan's reply.*—I note that there is a general feeling on the part of the Town Improvement Committees that they should have more discretion in the matter of spending their money and that Government sanction is now being insisted on in matters of detail which may well be left to the Committees. The question will be considered at an early date.

3. ***Superfluity of coins and the prevalence of counterfeit coins.***

*Mr. S. Ganapathy Pillai* (Member, Trivandrum Trading Classes) said that the coins that passed for legal tender in Travancore were, (1) of the British coins—the Rupee, the 8 anna piece, the 4 anna piece, the 2 anna piece and the one anna piece, and (2) of the Travancore coins—the half and quarter Rupee pieces, the one fanam piece, the one chackram, half chackram and one-fourth chackram pieces and the single cash, and that the difficulties felt by the merchants in dealing with these coin were very great. While, in other parts of India, money transactions were done in the day-time and by means of currency notes, in Travancore, they were carried on mostly in the evening, between 7 and 10 P. M., not by means of currency notes, but in small coins such as cash. The Bankers would collect the dues from their several customers in all sorts of coins and take them to their Banks at a late hour in the night. After describing the difficulties experienced and the loss of valuable time and money incurred in sorting and counting the several varieties of the

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